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DOCUMENTS.

[The editor would be pleased to receive manuscript documents bearing on the history of the Pacific Northwest for publication in this department of the Washington Historical Quarterly.]

Beginning of the San Juan Dispute.

Harry K. Struve, of Seattle, in an examination of the papers left by his distinguished father, the late H. G. Struve, came upon the following important and interesting document and promptly presented it to the Washington University State Historical Society. The signature was submitted to the inspection of R. E. Gosnell, Provincial Archivist of British Columbia, who pronounced it genuine. Mr. Gosnell is the author of the volume on Sir James Douglas about to appear in the "Makers of Canada" series. He is therefore probably the best living authority on the writings and history of Douglas.

To His Excellency
Governor Stevens
&c. &c. &c.
Sir

Victoria, Vancouver's Island
26th April 1855.

I have received a communication from Mr. Charles Griffin a British Subject, residing on the Island of San Juan, giving information to the effect that an armed party of American citizens ostensibly acting under the direction of a person named Barnes, who styles himself Sheriff of Whatcomb County, landed on the Island of San Juan, and demanded from the said Charles Griffin certain monies in payment of Taxes, on behalf and in the name of the United States of America, a demand which as a British subject, acknowledging no authority except that emanating from his own Government, he refused to pay.

Mr. Barnes and his followers during Mr. Griffin's absence, and while his servants were with one or two exceptions, dispersed at their several occupations did abstract a number of valuable sheep, which they put into boats, and were about to depart with the same when Mr. Griffin returned and demanding restitution of his property was menaced with violence and put in danger of his life.

I have taken the liberty of calling your excellency's attention to that matter for the purpose of learning from you if the said Mr. Barnes' proceedings were in that instance authorized or sanc-

tioned in any manner by the Executive Officers of Washington Territory. His own verbal statements induced Mr. Griffin to believe that he had authority from you to levy Taxes on British subjects residing on the Island of San Juan, but I am conscious that it would be doing you a great injustice to assume, without better evidence, the truth of such statements; and also prove an ungracious requital for the kindness with which you generously vindicated, at Washington, the cause of truth and justice when a groundless charge was brought against the character of this Government.

Should Mr. Barnes have acted under the orders of the Executive Officers of Washington Territory, it is the intention of the persons, who have been plundered of their property to bring forward a claim for damages, as against the United States, but on the contrary if acting in a lawless manner, without due authority they will proceed by criminal action against the parties as for a felonious carrying away of the property of British subjects on the Territory of Great Britain.

I trust your Excellency will take measures to prevent the repetition of such acts of violence on the part of American citizens, which must ultimately lead to dissension and bloodshed, an event which all would have cause to deplore.

The Island of San Juan has been in the possession of British Subjects, for many years, and it is with the other Islands of the Archipelago de Arro declared to be within the Jurisdiction, of this Colony, and under the protection of British Laws. I have also the orders of Her Majesty's Ministers to treat those Islands as part of the British Dominions.

If our claims be unfounded, the fact must be proven by other means than by acts of violence, which from the nature of the question at issue, must be at once a fruitless and mischievous waste of energy, as they can neither add force to the claims of the United States, nor detract from those of Great Britain, founded on Treaty stipulations, by which the Governments of both nations have agreed to abide.

Wisdom and sound policy enjoin upon us the part of leaving the question to the decision of the Supreme Governments, and of abstaining from enforcing rights, which neither party is disposed to acknowledge.

Any other course must eventually lead to dissension and be productive of the most serious evils. Our united force when exerted in the common cause of humanity is hardly sufficient to restrain the wily savage from deeds of Blood, and that influence must, in a great measure, cease with our friendly relations, and both countries will suffer from the absence of that wholesome controul, which now holds the native Indian Tribes in check.

I trust your Excellency continues to entertain the sentiments in respect to this question, which you expressed at our last interview and that every exertion will be made on your side, as well as on ours to prevent disorders, which will complicate, and render the question more difficult of settlement.

This Government will be responsible for the acts of British Subjects and punish all offences committed by such on the Arro Islands, and I trust your Excellency is disposed to exercise the same vigorous controul in that quarter over the conduct of citizens of the United States.

I have the honor to be
Your Excellency's
most obedient
humble Servant
JAMES DOUGLAS
Governor
Vancouver's Island.

Reply From Governor Stevens.

That Governor Stevens knew the case was important is shown by two events. In the first place he had the letter from Governor Douglas transcribed into his official records where it may still be seen in the archives in the capitol at Olympia. In the next place he replied in a firm and dignified manner. His reply is copied in the same volume. These two copies were found by Ashmun N. Brown, former Secretary to Governor Mead, and were made by him the basis of a valuable and interesting article in which he took occasion to call attention to the fact that this diplomacy over the sheep should supplant or be added to the old familiar pig story as being the foundation of the San Juan dispute. From Mr. Brown's article in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer for January 7, 1906, the reply by Governor Stevens is taken as follows:

Olympia, Washington Territory,
May 12, 1855.

Sir—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of April 26, in which you state that information has been received by you "to the effect that an armed party of American citizens ostensibly acting under the direction of a person named Barnes, who styles himself sheriff of Whatcom county, landed on the island of San Juan and demanded from Charles Griffin certain moneys in payment of taxes on behalf and in the name of the United States of America. A demand which as a British subject, acknowledging no authority except that emanating from his own government, he refused to pay;" that Mr. Barnes and his followers "abstracted a number of valuable sheep," and that upon Mr. Griffin's demanding restitution he was menaced with violence and put in danger of his life.

Of the matters detailed by you I have no official information save from your communication. It is known, however, that Mr. Barnes is the sheriff of Whatcom county. You further state that you have called my attention to the same for the purpose of ascertaining "if the said Mr. Barnes' proceedings were in that in-